



Contribution for cultivators of Mahatma Phule

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Abstract

There are so many areas of reforms such as education for shudras, eradication of untouchability, discrimination, Self-immolation of widows and child marriages for reformers during pre-independence. The present research paper discusses here the contribution of Mahatma Phule in agriculture and its cultivators. The researcher tries to pursue the answers of the particular area of contribution of Mahatma Phule; and that is agriculture and its cultivators. How Mahatma Phule tried to solve the relative questions of agriculture and its cultivators. What are basic needs to solve the questions of agriculture and farmers? How did he tackle such questions for the upliftment of downtrodden people? What are the preventive measures he suggested? The researcher is tried to answer by reviewing the literature of Mahatma Phule and descriptive methods to search out the problems formulated.

We can clearly see the significant contribution of Mahatma Phule not only in limited areas of reforms but he tried to answer also all the questions of surviving oneself. As a researcher, I tried to find humanitarian persona aspects of living a life of Mahatma Phule towards the whole society and humanity as well.

Mahatma Phule strived to touch and answer to all the field of social reforms tried to tackle as well as overcome the social evils. Rather than this he concentrated his attention the most ignorant field that is agriculture. The recommendations have been drawn by Mahatma Phule are still relevant even today for agriculture. He is the father of social revolution in India in the truest sense.

Keywords: Cultivator, Peasant, Farmer, Krantiba, Mahatma

Introduction

Mahatma Phule had strived to uplift the downtrodden people. He worked day and night for their betterment. Before emancipating them, he knew the reason for their plight. He knew that education is the need for all to uplift them from their bad condition. While doing this task, he experienced the plight of farmers too. He touched the various areas of social reforms so we can say Mahatma Phule, "*Father of Our Social Revolution.*"^[1] Some of the thinkers called him as '*Krantijyoti*'. Krantiba is also the next honour suits to him. He touched and prevailed with all the areas of social o reforms. He revolutionized all the areas of social reforms as well. Downtrodden called him '*Mahatma*' (Great soul) He was honoured by them all as their leader in the form of Mahatma and their ideal leader for their upliftment. They could clearly experience his contribution towards their betterment and upliftment.

The life of cultivator: Mahatma Jyotiba Phule as a cultivator

Jyotirao Phule was born on 11th April 1827 and passed away on 28th November 1890, at the of 63. During his life span; he revolutionized for the girl's education. He was known as the pioneer of girl's education in India. He totally devoted his life to social reform and working tirelessly for the upliftment of farmers, Dalits and women's education. Through his writing and speeches, he challenged the existing social strata and advised for education as a mean of achieving freedom, equality and brotherhood. He believed that education could bring health, wealth and prosperity to the society and ultimately nation. The education simply

enables individuals to live with dignity. Until his last breath, he continued to write and speak, paving the way for social justice and judicious outlook for the whole human beings. He experimented with innovative ways to improve the lives of farmers. This raises a question in mind – if Mahatma Phule had lived for another 8-10 years, perhaps history would have been different. Maybe he would have answered the remaining questions that were still lingering in his mind. Despite his busy life, he never took a moment's rest for himself or his family. What more could Mahatma Phule have achieved in those extra years?

In the year 1834; at the age of 7 years old, he had been admitted in school. During the period of 1834-1838 he was sent to the school of Pantoji for education in Marathi. A very disgraceful advice had been given to Govindrao Phule by Brahmin accountant. Due to this disgraceful advice; Jyotirao had been dropped out from school. After dropping out from the school; Jyotirao did so hard work in his field. After doing agricultural works and practices; he became the gardener of farm as well as his life in the truest sense. He realized and sensed the plight of cultivators. He was satisfied and graceful by doing the farm related works.

At the age of 13 in the years 1840 he had been married to Savitri. Jyotirao had got inborn entrepreneurship to do new innovative business ideas.

In the year 1841; Govindrao Phule sent Jyotirao to Scottish Missionary English School.

Firstly he had drawn his attention towards the eradication of untouchability. Mahatma Phule keenly knew if the poor farmer could get literate; no one would deceive him. So

education is the basic need to solve all the problems. One could empower oneself with the help of education.

Mahatma Jyotirao Phule and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar made the significant contributions to agriculture. Mahatma Jyotirao Phule's, original surname was 'Gorhe.' Great grandfather of Jyotirao Govindrao Phule hailed from a family of farmers in Katgun, Satara district, Maharashtra. His Great grandfather lived in Katgun, Satara district. He was occupied the most significant post of village labourer from 'Twelve Tradesmen' (*Bara Balutedar*). He had been fiercely a quarrel with Brahmin Kulkarni. Over the period of time, they moved to Khanwadi village, situated in the Purandar taluka of Pune district.

"Jyotirao Phule, born into the Hindu Kshatriya Mali caste, held a lower social status among the Kshatriyas."^[2] In the social hierarchy, he belonged to the Kshatriya cultivator class, and within the cultivator class, he made a further distinction between Shuddha Shetkari (pure cultivators) or Kunbi, Mali (Gardner) and Dhangar (Shepherd). The term "Shuddha Shetkari"^[3] referred to those who solely relied on farming for their livelihood.

On second, who cultivates vegetable crops and progresses in agriculture are known as *Mali* cultivators. *Dhangar Shetkari*, on the other hand, engaged in multiple tasks, such as herding cattle and cultivating.

Majority of society in India has been practising agriculture for livelihood. Jyotirao Phule emphasized the importance of agriculture as the primary occupation for the majority of society. He believed that agriculture was not only an economic activity but also fulfilled the basic human needs of food, clothing and shelter. According to him, agriculture was the sole occupation that could provide a comprehensive solution to the economic and social structure of a country.

In summary, Jyotirao Phule's family background, rooted in the agricultural community, greatly influenced his perspective on the significance of agriculture as a vital occupation for sustaining human life and fostering economic development in Indian society.

"The social system in India was divided into 4 varnas."^[4] Varnas were a way of categorizing people based on their occupations and there were 18 distinct castes, including Tambat, Patharvat, Lohar, Sutar, Sonar, Kasar, Kumbhar, Gurav, Dhangar, Gawli, Ladwani, Jain, Koshti, Sadi, Teli, Mali, Rangari and Chitari.

"Mahatma Phule, in his book 'Shetkaryacha Asud' (Cultivator's Whip) described the social structure."^[5]

Brahmins held a strong position in the societal hierarchy. From the Vedas times in Hindu religion, Brahmins were held the superior or prior position in social strata followed by Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Shudras and Atishudras (untouchables). This categorization of castes dilated in terms of superiority and inferiority. Brahmins considered themselves as divine. Brahmins were given prominent roles in various administrative institutions under the Peshwas in Maharashtra. While individuals from other castes could hold positions, they were given lower status, leading to Brahmins enjoying benefits and privileges in governance.

Due to this discrimination, Brahmins saw themselves as rulers, and the administration, resources, and facilities were tailored to favor them. This created a system where cultivators and farmers, burdened by heavy taxes imposed by the Peshwas, struggled to make ends meet. The surplus from their hard work went to the Peshwas, leaving farmers in dire financial conditions.

To alleviate the economic burden, Phule suggested that cultivators and farmers should cultivate their own land, keep savings in their households, and reduce their dependence on Brahmins and Peshwas. He emphasized the need for education, especially for the lower castes, as a means to empower them and challenge the existing social and economic structures. Before the British rule in India, the government's responsibility for education was nonexistent. It was only after the advent of the British East India Company in 1813, that a directive was issued to provide education to all.

1. Cultivator: a person who prepares and uses land for growing plants or crops
2. Peasant: (especially in the past, or in poorer countries) a farmer who owns or rents a small piece of land
3. Farmer: a person who owns and manages a farm

Practical Work Done by Mahatma Phule in Farm.

He himself was farmer. He knew, faced and experienced the works, physical efforts and gaining at all in the farming. In between when he could not attend the schooling; he attended and worked hard in his field with his father and brother. He lived a life of a farmer.

"After the canal work was completed at Khadkwasla, the water was released for agricultural use. However, the farmers were hesitant to use the canal water for their fields, and were not enthusiastic about adopting new experiments or improvements. They were afraid of trying new things. Jyotirao had demanded through his writings and speeches that the government should provide good quality seeds, tools, and fertilizers to the farmers. He had praised the government's efforts in building canals, which was not without reason. Jyotirao understood that the farmers were opposing new agricultural methods due to ignorance and misconceptions. To set a good example and remove their misconceptions, Jyotirao purchased 200 acres of land and started farming using new methods, using canal water to cultivate potatoes, groundnuts, cauliflower, and sugarcane. His farm in Pune's Manjari jungle was famous, and some farmers followed his example, leading to the adoption of new agricultural practices in the Pune district."^[6]

While studying the biography of Mahatma Phule, it becomes clear that he was not just a mere orator. He wrote and spoke to strike at the root of the problem, and when change didn't happen, he set a personal example for society to follow. Mahatma Phule pioneered many innovative experiments, one of which was the agricultural experiment on 200 acres of land in Manjari. He encouraged farmers to try new and innovative methods in agriculture, to improve their lives and make it prosperous. This pure intention of Mahatma Phule is evident in the various innovative experiments he conducted.

The reasons that are responsible for the severely poverty of cultivators have been noted by Mahatma Phule^[7]:

1. Brahmins kept aloof the farmers from education intentionally.
2. Brahmins deceived in the name of religion to the farmers from his birth to death
3. Brahmins, European officers and money lenders were the real deceivers of farmers in the government.
4. The division of lands among farmers day by day.
5. The Illegitimate administration of forest department

6. Locals were not allowed to go to foreign in the name of religion.
7. Farming taxes encompassing land tax, local fund and revenue tax etc.
8. Unemployment increased due to the decreasing industry and business locally.
9. Farmers didn't have the strong breed of bullocks to do farming.
10. Jyotiba had voiced a speech on 'The Condition of Farmers' on 10th December 1882 at Bhaykhala in Mumbai.

Mahatma Phule suggested some preventive measures for the upliftment of farmers:^[8]

1. No Brahmin teachers. Only a person from farmer's family should become a teacher for farmers.
2. At least until class 6 literate and farmer person can only be 'Patil' of village.
3. It is the due responsibility of government to teach and launch new technology for cultivators cultivating the lands on its productive way.
4. There should be a ban by laws on killing cows and bullocks for eating purposes.
5. Government should build lakes, ponds and canals to provide water facilities for farming activities.
6. Cultivators should have the emission to cut the trees for building houses.
7. Government should organize the competitions for best crop production and give them awards.
8. To improve the farming, yield of crops; government should send the educated children of farmers abroad to study new agriculture techniques.
9. The government should give free irrigation facilities to farmers from rivers, canals and ponds.
10. The government should provide forest wood for agriculture tools
11. The government should spend the money from treasury to buy high-yield breeds of sheep and goats from other countries and breed them here, so that farmers can get organic manure and their income will increase
12. Farmers should be allowed to keep guns to protect their crops from wild animals in the forest.
13. Jyotiba Phule suggested most important measure to increase the income of farmers and government's revenue, agricultural exhibitions should be held ever Shraavan and exams related to agriculture and farming should be held in Ashwin month.
14. Farmers who excel in agriculture should be awarded degrees in agriculture.
15. The government should send the talented children of farmers to England to study agriculture technology at government expenses, so that they can increase their farm income by adopting new technology.
16. Lock hospitals should be set up in each tehsil places, and the government should make efforts to improve the hygiene of downtrodden farmers.

Many of the above preventive measures are still relevant for today's agriculture. The definite role of government for agriculture ensures the progress of a farmer.

Mahatma Phule finds the root cause of a problem and provides a long life solution. He was the great visionary reformer in terms of social revolution. This is nothing but drastic change in social revolution for the welfare of a

farmer. He could overcome and voiced against the social injustice done by orthodox Brahmins. He knew very better the responsibilities of a government to do for farmers. He observed the plight of a farmer on a ground reality so he could put the measures for the whole farmer's community.

Speech before Duke and Dutchess of Connaught

"You may think that India is a happy and contented country by looking at the valuable clothes and shining faces of the dignitaries, but the reality is different. The wealthy people who wear gold ornaments and fine clothes are not the true representatives of the country's population. The majority of the people in this country are farmers, and they are not represented by these wealthy individuals. The real India is seen in the villages, where people are poor, helpless and struggling to survive. Most of the rural population does not even have enough clothes to cover their shame. If the prince and princess want to see the real India, they should visit some nearby villages and witness the dire poverty and ignorance of the people. They should also visit some Mahar and Mang settlements and see for themselves if they are even more miserable than animals. This is the real India, and the prince and princess should tell Victoria that the poor people are struggling in poverty and desperately need education. This is our message to her."^[9]

When the majority of rural people, including the poor, Dalits, destitute, farmers, homeless, and helpless, were struggling to survive, Jyotirao fearlessly and clearly depicted a heartwrenching picture of the country's situation on the platform, addressing the Prince of England and his wife. He not only showed them the true state of India but also boldly advised them about the reality of India. He spoke solely for the benefit of the hardworking farmers who couldn't even get two meals a day, despite their toil.

Jyotiba as a 'Mahatma' or 'Krantiba'

"Just like Mahatma Buddha, Jyotirao was working for the upliftment of humanity, so he deserves to be called Mahatma," Maharaj would say. It's not just that, but Maharaj also suggested to the Mumbai committee that Jyotirao be given the title of Mahatma. When Jyotirao came to Mumbai in the summer of 1888, he delivered a lecture at the Raghunath Maharaj's samadhi, and on that occasion, the people of Mumbai conferred the title of Mahatma upon him. I was present in that gathering."^[10]

Jyotirao Phule had completed the age of 60 years. Up to that; he struggled with utmost good faith and devotion for shudras and farmers. The activists, followers and the downtrodden people showed the gratitude towards their leader and decided to pay the high regards him. The same function had been held at Mandavi, Koliwada on 11 May 1888. They all hoped that due to the struggle of their leader; they would have seen better days. Jyotiba Phule had strived to put all the efforts and life in their service. They all gathered and gave big hands and offered the title 'Mahatma' in regard to him.

Here some questions arise that 'Mahatma' means great soul. Is there any presence of soul? Has it proved? Did science prove the existence of soul? Most of the people would like to call Jyotiba Phule as 'Krantiba.' It is also the most suitable title conferred by majority of the people. Why Krantiba too? One who revolutionized the society on its new way. Jyotiba was the pioneer in all these things include: education, uproot discrimination, contribution for cultivators

and work for downtrodden people and literature for all humans to sense the plight of society.

“The orthodox had done the compartments themselves and they were doing exploitation of others. Hence the revolutionary work of literature of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule is significant for the study to percolate the philosophy for human being. There is reflection of humanism, fraternity, education, liberty and morality. These all aspects will strengthen the society. The literature included all aspects of human being i.e. emotions, rational thinking and the right as they are human.

Mahatma Phule has done revolutionary work through his literature. He unveiled the curtain of orthodox, their compartmental selfishness, their hallucination. Mahatma Phule wanted to get rid of the slavery of orthodox”^[11]

The author only talks only about the literary revolution by Jyotiba Phule. All other so aspects of his revolution can be discussed. Pioneering education for girls was the first attempt done by Mahatma Phule, Putting voice against social discrimination, contribution for cultivators and so on. In sum up, he revolutionized for the whole humanity.

Conclusion

As a nation of agriculture, India and Indian cultivators could uplift themselves with the thoughts percolation of Mahatma Phule. He was the devoted modern saint for the cultivators and leader in the truest sense. The preventive measures that suggested by Mahatma Phule are applicable and can be studied for better social life of a farmers.

Mahatma Phule had spent his whole life as cultivator and for the emancipation of cultivator practically in the truest sense.

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